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# TRIESTE

by

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UNITED COMMITTEE OF SOUTH-SLAVIC AMERICANS

465 Lexington Avenue, New York 17, N. Y.

*1945*



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The frontier marked, that is, the point at which Slav incursions were arrested in the seventh century as they tried to come out on to the Italian plain, and it had thus remained a clear national frontier for over a thousand years.

The Slovenes are a distinct Slav people, not two million all told, who have been settled for fifteen hundred years on both sides of the Julian Alps - the most western branch of the western Slavs. Not only was their territory without Italian inhabitants, it never had political connection with any Italian state. It was attached

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# TRIESTE

IN 1920, after the first German war, a frontier was established between Italy and Yugoslavia which *offended against both national principles and economic sense*. Now, after the second German war, the opportunity has come to *revise that frontier and to remedy the mistakes of 1920*.

THE TERRITORY in dispute is the area between the Italian frontier of 1914 and the Italian frontier of 1920, or roughly between the River Isonzo and the Julian Alps. Nowadays it is often described as Istria, though the former Austrian province of that name made up less than half of it.

The frontier of 1914 was also the old frontier between the Republic of Venice and the Holy Roman Empire, a frontier therefore of very long standing. It had been as well the national frontier between Italians and Slovenes, except for a handful of Slovenes (now about fifty thousand) west of the Isonzo, who were for centuries under Venetian, and since 1866 under Italian rule.

The frontier marked, that is, the point at which Slav incomers were arrested in the seventh century as they tried to come out on to the Italian plain; and it had thus remained a clear national frontier for over a thousand years.

The Slovenes are a distinct Slav people, not two million all told, who have been settled for fifteen hundred years on both sides of the Julian Alps — the most western fragment of the southern Slavs. Not only was their territory without Italian inhabitants; it never had political connection with any Italian state. It was subdued from the north by German rulers and early in the sixteenth



century became part of the family possessions of the House of Hapsburg.

The Slovenes were once the people of the country. With the growth of towns they became the people of the countryside, in common with all other Slav peoples of Europe except the Poles.

The Germans and the Italians had a consolidated national territory for many centuries before they established a national state; even when the upper classes spoke French they did not cease to regard themselves as Germans or Italians. Beyond the German and Italian national boundaries events took a different course, though less completely with the Poles and Magyars than elsewhere.

Here, the national differences of to-day are the class differences of yesterday. The towns did not grow out of the country: they were the creation of foreign conquerors and of foreign merchants, German or Italian "islands" in a Slav sea. The peasants remained Slav; the trader, the shopkeeper, the artisan, in time the administrator and the professional man, spoke the language of the town and, whatever his racial origin, became German or Italian, Pole or Magyar. A prosperous lawyer would in this period no more continue to use the Slav tongue of his parents than he would continue to sleep over the stove.

Not a town in eastern Europe but bears witness to this rule. In 1815 two thirds of the sixty thousand inhabitants of Prague called themselves German. A century later, when the population had increased tenfold, only twenty thousand Germans were counted.

Until 1880 the city council of Budapest transacted its business in German, since it was the body of the city merchants.

Riga was German; the towns of Transylvania were German; even the trading quarters of Constantinople had a German character.

*Farther* Further east the Poles played both parts in turn: in western Poland there were German towns in a Polish countryside, in eastern Poland there were Polish towns in an Ukrainian or Lithuanian countryside — Lvov the great example of the first, Vilna the great example of the second.

The territory of the Slovenes had two "colonisers." On the eastern side of the Julian Alps were the Germans, creating towns with a German character at Klagenfurt and Maribor. On the Adriatic coast were the Italians. Two centuries ago every fishing village and to outward view every port from Venice to the southern tip

of Greece appeared Italian. These towns and villages were not inhabited by Italians; but Italian was the language of administration and trade, especially the language of maritime trade. Every seaman spoke Italian as the uniform of his profession.

THE PEASANTS remained Slovene as they had always been. But until the beginning of the nineteenth century peasants had no political existence; their nationality counted no more than the nationality of their cattle. Even the French revolutionaries reckoned only with the educated and propertied classes, reckoned, that is, with the towns. Hence in 1815 Istria seemed to be Italian, so far as it seemed to be anything at all, as Dalmatia (where the Italians were not 5% of the population) seemed to be Italian, as Bohemia seemed to be German, or as the Ukraine seemed to be Polish.

The great political event of the nineteenth century which is shaping the destinies of central and eastern Europe to the present day, was the awakening of the peasant peoples. Towns grew no longer slowly, but at breathless speed. Peasants crowded in from the countryside too rapidly to be absorbed into the urban nations. Their peasant dialects revived as literary languages, and every peasant nation found intellectual leaders.

This great process created, or recreated, the Czechs, the Croats, the Slovaks, the Ukrainians — and the Slovenes.

In much of the area "colonised" by the Germans the Slovenes asserted themselves without difficulty, and before the end of the nineteenth century everybody recognised that Carniola, the Slovene territory beyond the Julian Alps, was inhabited almost exclusively by Slovenes.

It was the great misfortune of the Slovenes that, just before their national awakening, there was created, on their national territory, a great Mediterranean port, the greatest port in southern Europe after Marseilles and Genoa, and that this port was, quite without design, given an Italian character. Even without Trieste the Italians would no doubt have striven to maintain their superiority over the Slovenes, just as other "historic nations," the Germans, the Poles, the Magyars, resisted national emancipation elsewhere and resist it to the present day. Without Trieste the Italian claims would have lacked plausibility and substance. Even Italian patriotism could not have been inflamed for the twenty thousand



Italians of Gorica, the westernmost part of this territory.

Trieste was an "artificial" town, a creation of the railway age and of German plans for European domination. Until the 1840s it had been but an obscure fishing port of no trading importance. Its creator was Baron Bruck, a German from the Rhineland, and the first great advocate of the project which later became known as "Mitteleuropa" — the plan for bringing all Europe east of the Rhine under a single economic and political administration.

Bruck chose as the framework and trade name of this plan the Austrian Empire and the House of Hapsburg. Only this mistake distinguished his aims from those of William II or Hitler.

Bruck built the first docks in Trieste and founded the first shipping lines. In 1848 he became Austrian Minister of Commerce and then made the Austrian Empire a single tariff area with Trieste as the principal imperial outlet to the world.

These great schemes could never have been achieved before the age of railways, which freed central Europe from dependence on waterways and ended the monopoly of the Rhine, the Elbe, and the Danube. So far as foreign trade was concerned, the Austrian railways were made to centre on Trieste. By the beginning of the twentieth century there was a double-track line to Salzburg and so to southern Germany; a double-track line to Vienna and so to Bohemia; a single-track line through the Julian Alps to the Slovene districts and Styria; a double-track line to Ljubljana which gave another route to Vienna and which, after the Four Years' war, was extended to Zagreb and so tapped Croatia and western Hungary. But all this time no line of importance connected Trieste with Italy. Nor was this surprising — *there was no real connection between Trieste and Italy.*

TRIESTE fulfilled all Bruck's expectations. It became (to use the twentieth-century state names) the port of Austria, of Bavaria, of Hungary, of northern Yugoslavia, and to a considerable extent, of Czechoslovakia. Its trade range reached to western Rumania and to the Ukraine.

At the same time it would be a mistake to exaggerate the importance of the share of central European countries and to minimise the share of the territories which later became Yugoslav. One of the more subtle arguments of Italian apologists is to sug-

gest that Trieste is the port of central Europe, not of Yugoslavia. The trade figures of 1913 do not bear this out. Of the total railway traffic of 2,800,000 (metric) tons more than a quarter (800,000) came from the lands inhabited by Slovenes: German-Austria and the Czech lands came next with about 600,000 tons each.

Austria and Czechoslovakia had also other outlets through the German North Sea ports. The Slovenes had only Trieste and when, after 1920, they were cut off from Trieste by the Italian frontier, they were ruined.

Two countries hardly figure in the statistics of 1913. One is Croatia. Croatia was severed from Trieste by the railway policy of the Hungarian government (which controlled Croatia), designed to prevent any contact between Croatia and the Austrian part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Once a railway was built between Ljubljana and Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, as it was immediately after 1919, Croatia would have become a great user of Trieste, had not the Italian frontier barred the way. Then the Yugoslav share of the total would have reached at least a million tons.

*The other country which did not use Trieste was Italy. The Italian traffic with Trieste in 1913 was 85,000 tons, not 3 per cent. of the total. The great port of Venice was more than adequate for Italian needs; and the Italians desired Trieste not to use it themselves but to ruin it for the benefit of Venice, the merchants of which largely financed the political campaigns for its annexation, and to prevent its use by others.*

The trade statistics of 1913 can be thus summarised: *Trieste was essential for the foreign trade of the Slovenes and of northern Croatia; it was useful for the foreign trade of Austria and Czechoslovakia; it played no part whatsoever in the foreign trade of Italy. Thus, on economic grounds, Yugoslavia had the decisive claim to Trieste after the dissolution of the Hapsburg Monarchy.*

BUT TO REVERT to the character of Trieste before the Four Years' War, the great port traffic naturally brought with it industrial developments; not only shipbuilding, but oil refineries, food industries, and a great banking organisation.

Trieste, not surprisingly, became the most important insurance centre in central Europe. It became too, a cultural centre.



Just before 1914 it was inhabited by at least two writers of European importance, Svevo and James Joyce. It would be fanciful to find much of Trieste in *Ulysses*, though it must have been through Trieste that Bloom reached Dublin.

The writings of Svevo contain the full spirit of Trieste. Svevo's work is interesting for another reason. Though written in Italian (by no means the purest Tuscan), they have nothing in common with Italian literature, but are manifestly the work of a fellow-countryman of Schnitzler. In other words they are works of "Austrian" literature, which merely happen to be written in Italian, as Schnitzler's happen to be written in German. Both writers felt as "Austrians" and, like many who felt so, both writers were Jews.

Trieste thus grew, par excellence, as an "Austrian" town, created for an Austrian Imperial purpose. *It owed nothing to Italian effort.* Like the Austrian Empire, it had no national character. *It certainly did not serve, could never serve, any Italian economic need.* So far as it served a national purpose, that purpose, again like the Austrian Empire, was German, not Italian.

But, for convenience and certainly not by national design, Italian was the maritime language of the Austrian Empire, a language inherited from the Republic of Venice, and this at a time when the Slovenes of the surrounding countryside were still a "submerged people." Therefore when Trieste started on its career of greatness, it started as an Italian-speaking city, and remained predominantly so at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Thus its Italian language by no means meant that its inhabitants are predominantly Italian by descent. The few thousand Italians who had made up its total population at the beginning of the century were soon swamped by a flood of immigrants from the neighbouring countryside, from the German lands further north, and from the Levant. An Austrian enquiry of 1915 ascertained that more than half the population of Trieste was of Slovene descent, though two-thirds of the population considered themselves Italians.

A further element was of Croat descent. Add Germans and Jews (the most loyal of all Austrians), and there was little enough left of Italian blood. The majority of the population certainly called themselves Italian. *But they did this rather as a mark of*

*class distinction than out of Italian patriotism.* The "Italian" lawyer, clerk, or merchant was asserting his distinction from the unskilled labourers who still admitted to being Slovenes; not in the least was he demanding separation from the Austrian Empire and inclusion in Italy. *That would have been, and eventually was, his economic ruin.*

The "Italians" voted together. But they did this rather as a party of middle-class interests, not on grounds of nationality. Even so, despite the majority who returned themselves as Italians (*i.e.*, Italian-speakers) in the *Census*, the Italian political party never won a majority of votes. *The inhabitants of Trieste simply were not Italians.* They were at that time Austrians, meaning by that controversial word subjects of the non-national Habsburg Empire, who spoke Italian only because they had to speak something. Through the traditions of Venetia and Mediterranean trade, at that time Italian seemed the obvious tongue.

The high-water mark of Italian preponderance in Trieste was reached about 1880, when Trieste had become a great port, and before the Slovenes began to recover their national consciousness. In 1880 only 22% of the population was returned as Slovene.

But thereafter the tide turned. The "Italians" maintained a monopoly of commercial life, and practically a monopoly of schools and newspapers, the two weapons without which it is difficult to develop a national consciousness. Nevertheless, Slovene nationalism asserted itself. At the last Austrian census, in 1910, 29% of the population was returned as Slovene.

This increase owed something to further Slovene immigration from the countryside, but more to "conversion" of many who had previously been ashamed of their lower-class nationality. To be Slovene was at last becoming respectable, and since the majority of the population was indisputably Slovene or Croat by origin it was only a matter of time — had no outside force checked this development — before the majority of the population of Trieste would have reverted to its original nationality.

Austrian rule did not hold the balance perfectly even between South Slav and Italian. Like all Imperial bureaucrats, the Austrian officials sympathised (perhaps unconsciously) with the wealthier upper-class Italianisers. *Still, even so, had the Austrian Empire lasted for another generation, Trieste would have had a*



*South Slav majority. Twenty-five years of Italian rule has not managed to reduce the Slovene proportion to less than it was in 1910. The Italians, in fact, have had to exhaust every weapon of national oppression merely to succeed in keeping their numbers from declining.*

THE AUSTRIAN census of 1910 was the last free census, and also the last to take account of national character. It is therefore the only reliable basis on which to judge the national composition of these disputed areas.

It is not without faults. The Census in the towns was taken by the municipal authorities, and these were still predominantly Italian.

The first count in Trieste found only 36,000 Slovenes: A revision made by the Imperial authorities brought the number up to 56,000. In the other towns the figures were not revised. Further, the figures could give only the national balance as it existed in 1910; they could not allow for the process of Slovene awakening which was going on at an even faster rate.

Grouping together all the Yugoslav territory acquired by Italy in 1920, and adding the fifty thousand Slovenes already in Italy before 1914, there were altogether 538,331 Yugoslavs (Slovenes and Croats) and 354,000 Italians. A third of these Italians lived in the two towns of Trieste and Gorica. The southern half of the Istrian peninsula was inhabited, not by Slovenes, but predominantly by Croats, kindred Yugoslavs who were passing through the same process of national awakening. Here, too, the Italians lived in the coastal towns, above all in Pola, a great harbour important not as a commercial port, but as the base and construction centre of the Austrian navy.

These figures give an unmistakable picture. *The countryside was solidly Croat or Slovene. The towns were Italian "islands," which were gradually being submerged by the rising tide of the awakening peasant nation. As Prague and Brno became Czech; Bratislava, Slovak; Riga, Latvian; Posen, Polish; and Lvov, Ukrainian; so it seemed certain that Trieste would become Slovene.*

The Slovenes had every quality of the other awakening people. Their only fault was to be overtaken, while still half-submerged, by the Four Years war of 1914-1918.

TRIESTE was not a traditional object of Italian ambition. It was a recent creation and therefore counted for nothing in Italian tradition, unlike Venice. *It had no economic significance for Italy.* Moreover, the leaders of the Risorgimento, especially after 1848, saw that their success depended on preventing the Habsburg Empire from receiving German support. Anxious not to offend German sentiment (as against Austro-Hungarian), they consistently halted their ambitious at the frontier of the German world, and recognised that Trieste served German, *not Italian needs.* Even Mazzini, a man not usually influenced by practical considerations, declared the River Isonzo to be the natural frontier of Italy.

When the rising Kingdom of Italy acquired the province of Venetia from Austria in 1866 and occupied Rome (the Papal territory) in 1870, she had achieved full national unity. She could no longer live on an enthusiasm for national emancipation. The Italians had been promised great things from unification. Yet in fact Italy lacked all the qualities of a Great Power — except ambition.

Her politicians had exhausted themselves in achieving unification. None of the younger men now possessed those practical gifts in the international field which had distinguished Cavour. Thus in the 1870s, when Italy was torn by popular discontent, by resistance to taxation, and by anarchist outbreaks, her rulers could think of no other solution than artificially to return to the days of the Risorgimento and to divert Italian feeling against the former Italian bogey — Austrian rule.

The programme of this substitute-risorgimento, a very inferior edition of the original, was a mixture of nationalist claims and assertion of natural frontiers — the line of the Alps and the emancipation of Italians still in Austria were demanded together, though the two did not by any means coincide.

In fact the "natural frontier" would involve the inclusion of three hundred thousand Germans and half a million South Slavs in Italy. Still, this hardly mattered. The demand was not put forward as a matter of serious politics. It was merely a safety valve for internal discontent. Trieste was the only place of any size in these coveted areas.

Therefore Trieste became the symbol of the programme as a



whole, and for more than a generation the Trieste question was kept alive so that riotous mobs should throw their stones through the windows of the Austro-Hungarian Embassy instead of through the windows of the Italian Home Office.

The agitation for Trieste did not prevent Italy's being for more than thirty years (from 1882 to 1915) the ally of Austria-Hungary in the Triple Alliance; just as membership of the Triple Alliance did not prevent Italian politicians continuing to proclaim the grievance of Trieste.

ITALY would never have gone to war for the sake of Trieste; yet when she went to war in 1915 Trieste inevitably provided the excuse. Italy wished to take part in the Four Years war in order to prove herself a Great Power, and she was anxious to sell herself to the highest bidder. The Germans were ready to bribe Italy with Habsburg territory, but they could not agree to their own exclusion from the Adriatic: they offered south Tyrol, *but not Trieste*.

England and France had no such hesitation. They believed that the unbreakable German front in France could be turned by an attack through Italy, and they were willing to pay almost any price, in terms of Habsburg territory, for Italy's entry into the war. They accepted Italy's claim to the "natural frontiers" of the Alps, and, *knowing little or nothing of the national circumstances, hardly realised that they were agreeing to an act of national injustice*. Even if they had, they would have argued that this was an inevitable sacrifice, worth making for the sake of a speedy victory.

Besides, the dissolution of Austria-Hungary was at this time no part of their programme. They supposed that the Habsburg Empire would continue to exist, even though in diminished form; and since the Habsburgs were now the agents of Germany, it was reasonable to transfer Trieste and Pola to Italy in order to cut Germany off from the Adriatic.

The Treaty of London of April 1915 concluded the bargain between Italy and the Western Powers. Italy was promised the line of the Alps and the northern part of Dalmatia.

The only point not included in Italy's gains was Fiume. This omission was not at all on grounds of justice. Fiume was technically part of Hungary; and as both the allies and Italy cherished

the illusion that a great Hungary would be a counterpoise against Germany, they left to this imaginary friend the outlet on the Adriatic.

England and France made, no doubt, a bad bargain; still, they acted with fairness according to their lights. The Italians had demanded the whole of the Dalmatian coast; but the Western Allies were loyal to Serbia and insisted that she should have her share in southern Dalmatia. Their fault was to fail to foresee the emergence of a state comprising all the South Slavs, though this was a fault shared by many of the South Slavs themselves.

At any rate, the Treaty of London paid to Italy an acceptable price and Italy entered the war with her claims to Trieste internationally recognised. The Treaty of London is the only legal basis for Italian rule in Trieste; and anyone who wishes to maintain this rule is, inescapably, an advocate of the Treaty of London. He is asserting not merely that Italy performed valuable services in the Four Years' war, but that by these services (and despite her subsequent acts) she earned a reward which must be immutably preserved, whatever the injustice to others.

The Italians had called the war of 1859 "the war for Lombardy" and the war of 1866 "the war for Venice"; so in their attempt to recapture the glamorous days of the Risorgimento they called the Four Years war "*the war for Trieste*." But when the end of the war came in 1918 it was in circumstances very different from those envisaged in 1915. The Habsburg Empire dissolved and a state of the South Slavs sprang up over night.

But the Italians refused to abandon anything of their treaty rights. Italy was a nation of over forty millions with a powerful army, ineffectual indeed against Germany or Austria-Hungary, but well-equipped by England and the United States; and England and France were bound to support her claims. Yugoslavia was newly created, without friends, her only force the Serb army which had paid a terrible price in the fighting against Austria-Hungary. Her first leaders too, were Serbs who cared too little for the destinies of Slovenes and Croats in the remote north-west.

The Yugoslav cause was defended in the peace negotiations by President Wilson; he achieved nothing, except to destroy his popularity in Italy. The Great Powers would not coerce Italy, but shrank from themselves committing an act of national injustice.



Therefore they passed by on the other side and left Italy and Yugoslavia to settle their frontiers between themselves.

Yugoslavia was helpless and had to accept the Italian terms. The outcome was the Treaty of Rapallo of November, 1920, which gave Italy all her demands except the coast of Dalmatia. This imperialistic treaty was not the work of Fascists. It was concluded when Italy was still a liberal parliamentary country, and her Foreign Minister responsible for the Treaty was Count Sforza, a man of liberal reputation.

This was not all. By the Treaty of Rapallo, Fiume was to become a Free City. Hardly had the treaty been signed, when an Italian adventurer, financed with Italian money and equipped with Italian arms, seized the city under the protection of the Italian navy. Once more the Yugoslavs could do nothing and in 1924 they acquiesced in the incorporation of Fiume in Italy.

*The fate of the Free City of Fiume is worth meditating by those who now advocate that Trieste should become a Free City in its turn; and it is also worth meditating that the "legionaries" who seized Fiume became thereafter the most violent and successful agents of the Fascist coup d'état. Italy paid for the enslavement of Fiume by being herself enslaved.*

Thus Italy brought under her rule more than 600,000 Slovenes and Croats. The Italians rejected as an insult to their national honour a proposal to give these South Slavs the protection of the Minorities Treaty, though they were fulsome in their assurances that their nationality would be respected.

*Italy did not wait until the coming of Fascism to break these assurances; they were never fulfilled even in the days of constitutionalism. The guilt for the ill-treatment of the Slovenes and Croats cannot be placed solely on Fascism; it must be shared by Bonomi, by Count Sforza, and by every liberal parliamentarian.*

Even were the future of Italian liberalism secure, it would be small consolation to the Slovenes and Croats to return to the days of 1920. *Italian rule over these South Slavs had no parallel in Europe until the worst days of the Nazi dictatorship.* The South Slavs were deprived of their schools; they were deprived of their newspapers and books; they were not allowed to use their language in public meetings or in the law courts; the Slovene-speaking bishops and clergy were expelled, with the connivance of the

Vatican; even Slovene-speaking doctors were forbidden. When it was urged on an Italian doctor that his patients could no longer explain their symptoms to him, he replied: "Nor can the cow explain its symptoms to the veterinary surgeon."

Such was the Italian estimate of these peaceful, educated, civilised Slav peasants. No Italian ever protested; no attempt at improvement was ever made. Italians of all parties agreed in the aim of exterminating the nationality of the Slovenes and Croats under Italian rule.

This aim was not achieved. A people proves its right to live by asserting its will to live; and no people has proved its right better than the Slovenes west of the Julian Alps. The Italians were driven to ever more terroristic methods and to great treason trials, one in 1930 and an even more brutal one in 1941.

Tre British [and the American] public is fond of plebiscites. Here was a plebiscite continuing over more than twenty years, a permanent popular vote of which the result cannot be doubted. The Slovenes as a people refused to die; they refused to accept Italian rule.

Their opportunity came in 1940 when Italy entered the war on the side of Germany. At last the Slovenes could have allies. They then became, before the war had reached Yugoslavia proper, the allies of Great Britain when she had few others. They served as a rallying point for resistance throughout southeastern Europe; and they became in time one of the strongest elements in the National Liberation Movement which grew up in Yugoslavia under Marshal Tito.

*Thus the Slovenes do not ask to be liberated from Italy. They have liberated themselves. All they ask is not to be put forcibly back under Italian rule.*

THE ITALIANS paid a heavy price for the possession of Trieste. Many of those who burnt Trade Union buildings and beat or murdered liberal Italian politicians had learnt their trade in Trieste, burning the headquarters of the Slovene national club and murdering Slovene spokesmen — *with the approval of liberal Italians.* Still worse, the possession of Trieste compelled Italy to a foreign policy of imperialism, led her to revisionism, and ultimately brought her to all the disasters of 1940 and the years that followed.



*For Trieste was not, and never could be, an Italian port: it had neither trading connections with nor economic meaning for Italy.* Under whatever national sovereignty, it remained the port of central Europe; it was inextricably bound up with its hinterland, as far north as Prague and as far east as Budapest. Formerly it had been the means by which German imperialism advanced to the Adriatic; now it became the means by which Italian imperialism tried to thrust itself into central Europe. Italian governments, even before Mussolini, manipulated the tariff charges of Trieste in order to compel the states of central Europe to become Italian satellites. Yugoslavia and Czecho-Slovakia would not degrade themselves in this way and so were driven to use the ports of northern Germany, until — too late — they discovered that they had given themselves an even worse master.

So grossly did the Italians abuse their control of Trieste that goods produced five miles over the Yugoslav frontier were exported by way of Hamburg. In Austria and Hungary, however, there were reactionary or fascist parties, which rejected the settlement of 1919; and Italy held out the promise of preferential treatment at Trieste as a means of helping them to power. Horthy in Hungary, Dollfuss and Schuschnigg in Austria, were Italian dependents; each destroyed democracy, each preached revisionism, each opened the way to a new German aggression. *And the Italian control of Trieste was the origin of their power.*

Such are the facts about Trieste, and they are beyond dispute. In the area as a whole the Yugoslavs are in an unchallengeable majority, and *even in Trieste the majority is not Italian by origin. Trieste has no historical significance for Italy. It has no economic importance for Italy. It has always been exploited by Italy for imperialistic purposes and Italy has proved herself unqualified to rule over peoples of other nationalities.* The question of Trieste will have to be decided afresh at the coming peace conference.

THERE ARE FOUR possible solutions:

- (i) The frontier could be left unchanged on condition that Italy gave guarantees of good treatment of the Slovenes;
- (ii) The territory could be partitioned, giving the country districts to Yugoslavia and leaving Trieste in Italian hands.

- (iii) The country districts could be given to Yugoslavia and Trieste could be made a Free City; or
- (iv) All the territory east of the Isonzo could be given to Yugoslavia.

There are arguments in favour of each of these courses; and it is better to examine them frankly than to pretend that no differences of opinion exist.

THE PRINCIPAL argument in favour of the first course is that the frontier established by the Treaty of Rapallo exists, or rather existed until fairly recently. For the Yugoslavs to demand Trieste seems somehow grasping, in a way that it does not appear grasping of the Italians to desire to retain it.

This is not a very serious argument. It is more to the purpose to argue that the new democratic regime in Italy will start life under an impossible handicap if it is compelled to renounce territory for which Italy fought a great war and which a generation of Italians have been taught to regard as an integral part of Italy.

A plausible argument — though it would have applied with even more force to Alsace or Posen in 1919. Germany, too, had fought a great war for Alsace and this had been German for more than forty years, whereas Trieste has been Italian for only twenty-five. Yet the victorious allies, of whom Italy was one, were unanimous in inflicting this handicap on the democratic German republic. Posen had been in German hands for more than a century and was universally regarded in Germany as German; yet the allies were unanimous in restoring it to Poland.

The argument would appear equally fraudulent in the case of Trieste, were it not that Poland and France are historic countries, and the Slovenes are not — therefore it is possible to advocate national injustice at their expense in a way that would not be possible with the French or Poles. Besides, is it so certain that Italian national feeling is really so deeply bound up with the fate of Trieste? Certainly those elements which in essence have remained Fascist would deplore the loss of Trieste, since this would mark the end of Italy's imperialist plans in central Europe; but it is difficult to suppose that these elements carry much weight with democratic opinion.

Or rather they would not carry much weight if the present



leaders of democratic Italy genuinely set their faces against them. But the truth is that Italian feeling about Trieste is deliberately provoked by the new "democratic" journalists and politicians, as it was deliberately provoked by the liberal politicians of a previous generation. The purpose is the same: *it is to unite Italy in some foreign quarrel and so distract attention from the terrible, and perhaps, insoluble domestic problems.* Once it was the Austro-Hungarian embassy, now it is the Yugoslav mission, which provides the safety valve for Italian political feeling.

Trieste is not the only object of Italian ambition which is endangered. Italy fought a war, with a great deal of patriotic enthusiasm, for Libya, which has been Italian for thirty years; and she fought a war, with quite unparalleled patriotic outbursts, for Abyssinia, which has been a principal element in Italian policy ever since 1889. If the Italian masses felt deeply about any foreign issue — and there is no evidence that they do — they would feel more deeply about Abyssinia, or even Libya, than about Trieste. Yet we are not told that the loss of Libya and Abyssinia will discredit the new democratic Italy beyond redemption.

And for a very simple reason: the Italian leaders know that in the present circumstances, their outcry will be ineffective where British interests are concerned. But they hope that the freedom of half a million Yugoslavs and the economic co-operation of central Europe is not a British interest.

One Italian argument in favour of retaining the 1920 frontier is, however, well-founded, though it is no longer an argument which the Italians care to use. When in 1919 the Italians pressed their claims to Trieste, they were repeatedly asked by President Wilson whether they would not be content with the possession of the city, allowing the country districts to go to Yugoslavia. The Italians always replied that he who possessed Trieste must possess its hinterland as far as the line of the Alps; and they were right.

To draw the frontier five miles behind the coast would create an impossible strategic position. It would condemn Trieste to starvation, since the city draws its food supplies from the whole of the hinterland.

The experiment of a city without hinterland was tried on a small scale at Zadar (Zara), a town on the Dalmatian coast which was allotted to Italy. This experiment was the ruin of Zadar: the

inhabitants had to get their food supplies by sea from Italy, they could not even go for a country walk; and no peasants could come into the town to use the shops. Yet Zadar is little more than a village, Trieste a city of a quarter of a million inhabitants.

Such a frontier, ruinous to the inhabitants of the city, is also ruinous to the peasants of the hinterland. They lose the natural market for their products; they lack the enormous conveniences of a great city at their doorstep; there are no secondary schools to which they can send their children; they have to put up with the very inferior amenities of petty village life.

Imagine what it would be like to live at St. Albans and be unable to visit London, or to live at Bury and be unable to visit Manchester. Yet St. Albans and Bury are sizeable towns: the Yugoslavs of Istria have none such. This argument was very well put by the Italians in 1919; but it has now disappeared from their repertoire.

THE ARGUMENT of the last paragraph has anticipated the consideration of the second solution: solution by partition. This solution has a misleading appearance of fairness, attractive to the British public. The countryside is Slovene and Croat (Yugoslav), Trieste is — as to a majority — Italian, and is perhaps linked by an Italian-speaking coastal strip with Italy proper. This last is not an important consideration, since Trieste in practice is not linked to Italy by land, but by sea.

Nevertheless, why not draw the frontier along the national line? This proposal was for more than twenty years violently rejected by all Italian writers, even the most enlightened, and it was repudiated by Count Sforza as late as the summer of 1944. But now the more skillful Italian propagandists realise that they must yield something, though they seek to yield as little as possible.

Salvemini, a man with a distinguished liberal record, has devised a most ingenious solution. He admits that if the area be taken as a whole the Yugoslavs are in a considerable majority. Therefore, he says, let us not take it as a whole! Let us take the areas most distant from Trieste, the least valuable districts and the most backward; let us peel them off, as it were, until we have reduced to Yugoslavs from 600,000 to 300,000. Then the Italians would be in a majority and entitled to retain not only Trieste, but



also territory inhabited by more than a quarter of a million Yugoslavs.

By a similar selection of certain wards of Glasgow or Liverpool, it could be proved that Glasgow and Liverpool ought to be ceded to Eire. Yet no one doubts that Glasgow is Scottish and Liverpool English.

And for a very simple reason: all over Europe, except in Istria, it has become an indisputable rule that the population of a territory must be taken as a whole and that a language "island" must follow the nationality of the surrounding countryside. Lvov, isolated from its countryside, has beyond dispute a Polish majority; yet with general approval it has become Ukrainian. The heart of Prague had, until recently, a German majority; yet it became Czech, with the approval of all but the Germans. In fact, as the historical analysis of the earlier part of this pamphlet showed, every town in eastern Europe was a foreign "island" in a peasant sea; but every "island" has had to accept the way of life imposed by the sea about it. Only the Slovenes are denied the advantage of this rule.

To leave Trieste, and no more, to Italy, would have every conceivable disadvantage. It would be economically ruinous. The Italians would claim that by partition a national division had taken place and that they were therefore free from any obligations to the Slovene minority which remained.

For, while it was possible to partition this disputed area so as to leave no Italians under Yugoslav rule, it is not possible to partition so as to leave no Slovene under Italian rule; and, despite the silence of the Italian census figures, there are at least 60,000 Slovenes in Trieste alone.

Every friend of Italy hopes that Italian liberalism will have a rebirth, and in this hope keeps charitably silent about Italy's record during the last twenty years. For this reason I have deliberately spent only a brief paragraph on the story of Italian terrorism and misrule over the Slovenes, though it is a story which could fill a book. But when Italian writers, such as Salvemini, write as though it were unthinkable that Italians should ever be under Yugoslav rule, but reasonable that Slovenes should be under Italian rule, it is impossible not to recall the record of the last twenty years. On that record there can be only one verdict:

*Italy, whether Liberal or Fascist, cannot be entrusted to rule over non-Italian peoples.*

Perhaps it is harsh to make too much of the historical record; but it would be dishonest to pass it over altogether. These things happened. They may be excused — though I can think of no excuse. But they cannot be ignored. Italian rule over the Slovenes (and over the Germans of the Tyrol) had no parallel in Europe, until the worst days of Hitler.

Let us, with the Italian propagandists, question the good faith of the new Yugoslav rulers, let us suppose that in a little while Yugoslavia will revert to the worst days of the dictatorship of King Alexander. Even in those days the ten thousand Italians of Dalmatia under Yugoslav rule had their own newspapers, and more schools than all the 600,000 Yugoslavs in Italy. Thus, the record of Yugoslavia at its worst is better than that of Italy at its best.

But even were we to turn our backs altogether on the past and to suppose that Signor Bonomi, Count Sforza and their liberal colleagues would behave in 1946 or 1947 in a totally different way from the way that Signor Bonomi, Count Sforza and their liberal colleagues behaved in 1920, *the economic arguments against partition remain*. The British and American public are not much concerned with these political disputes. For the sake of peace they are prepared to acquiesce in national injustice. But they desire that Trieste shall recover its old greatness and become again the port of central Europe.

For the sake of argument we may pretend that Italy will give up her imperialist plans in central Europe. But Trieste has no economic meaning for Italy except as an instrument for these economic plans; a truly pacific Italy will therefore inevitably neglect Trieste. Trieste is a great port; its docks and harbours cost money and need constant care. But Italy is a poor country and is likely to remain so. For very many years the Italian Minister of Transport will have a limited budget; and he would have in his charge four great ports — Naples, Genoa, Venice, and Trieste.

The first three of these serve Italian needs and every penny spent on them will benefit Italy. Trieste does not serve Italy, and money spent on it would be merely a charitable contribution for the benefit of the states of central Europe. Will an impoverished



Italy be anxious to make these gifts of charity? Is it indeed reasonable to expect her to do so? To leave Trieste in Italian hands is to condemn Trieste to decay, to fetter the economic development of Yugoslavia, and to compel both Austria and Czechoslovakia to depend on the North Sea ports of Germany.

THUS, THE PROPOSAL to leave Trieste in Italian hands is condemned on every ground. The third solution is to attempt to devise some method of taking Trieste away from Italy without giving it to Yugoslavia. This seems a strange ambition; but the reason for it, though not consciously appreciated by its authors, is easy to appreciate. It springs from the belief that the Italians are civilised and that the Yugoslavs are not, and that therefore Italians should not be put under Yugoslav rule. In the popular mind, the Italians are still the heirs of Dante and of the Renaissance; and the Yugoslavs are, as Bismarck called them, "sheep stealers."

No one can hold this view who has ever been to Ljubljana or has lived among the Slovenes. But few English [and American] people visit Ljubljana and many visit Rome; and, when they visit Rome, they conveniently forget that they are visiting the city of Mussolini. Similarly, visiting Yugoslavia, they may be ignorant that they are visiting the country which gave the Slavonic world (and Russia) its first alphabet, and in the modern age produced Tesla, who invented the poly-phase dynamo.

If we pass the sponge of oblivion over the Italian record of the last twenty years, we must also pass the sponge over the record of the preceding centuries, which the Italians themselves have found it easy to forget. To talk as though the Italians belong to western civilisation and the Slovenes and Croats do not is indeed to remain faithful to the spirit of the British Prime Minister who supported German claims against another "far-away people of whom we know nothing."

This was never a good argument. It is now seven years out-of-date, seven of the most decisive years in world history.

Another suggestion which has been made is that the proper solution for Trieste can be devised only if we grasp that Trieste is neither Italian nor Yugoslav, but "Austrian."

In one sense this is true, though even so the discovery is neither

profound, nor helpful. For to assert that Trieste is Austrian is merely to utter a truism about its origin, and remind us once again that Trieste was created by the Habsburg monarchy for an Imperial "Austrian" purpose.

This premise solves nothing, for the Habsburg monarchy and its empire are dead, and nothing will revive them. Nor is the petty state of German Austria in any sense the heir of that Habsburg Empire. The Empire was inherited by the various nations of central Europe. Only in innocence of history and present fact could one confuse the non-national Austrian Empire of the past and the German-national Austrian State of yesterday and tomorrow, and propose that Trieste should be given to this new Austria, which has nothing of the old Austria but the name.

This proposal in any case is made doubly impractical by geographical circumstances. Trieste is more than sixty miles from the southernmost point of the Austrian frontier. Between Austria and Trieste lies country that is solidly Slovene, and as such disputed by nobody.

Moreover, these Slovenes have been among the most stalwart supporters of the cause of the United Nations. The German-Austrians, on the other hand, have been as stalwart supporters of Hitler, and have provided many of the worst Nazi butchers all over Europe.

TO RETURN to real life. The only serious proposal which would keep the Yugoslavs out of Trieste is to make Trieste a Free City. This is a very different thing from making Trieste a free port, a proposal that is not in dispute. A free port merely implies that goods passing to or from Czechoslovakia, Austria Hungary or other countries beyond Yugoslavia would not have to pay Yugoslav customs dues; apart from any international obligations that were imposed, this would be imposed by Yugoslav self-interest, since it would promote the prosperity of Trieste.

Since even if Trieste does not go to Yugoslavia, Yugoslav territory will intervene between Trieste and these Countries, exemption from Yugoslav customs dues will have to be arranged in any case.

A Free City is much more than a free port; it is an independent state, governing itself; perhaps under some international supervision. To make Trieste a Free City would certainly ensure that



its Italian character would be preserved, since the Italians would have a majority on the city council. It might ensure that Trieste played its full part as the outlet for central Europe.

But, since neither Italy nor Yugoslavia would be willing to provide the money for its upkeep, it would have to be subsidised by the Great Powers, who, presumably, had imposed the solution. Would this also ensure that the Slovene minority in the city had also their full national rights or that the Slovenes of the hinterland could develop their national culture in Trieste?

The answer is easy. If the city council were unchecked, there would be no national equality. The immediate majority would be Italians — the very men who took the lead in all the worst activities of Fascism. They would be perfectly aware that, with fair play, the Slovenes would eventually acquire a majority, as they were already on the way to do before 1914. The Italians could hold their own only by forbidding Slovene schools, Slovene newspapers, and the use of Slovene in the law courts and public offices.

The international commission would, therefore, have constantly to intervene. If it insisted on fair treatment for the Slovenes, there would be Italian riots in Trieste, and all over Italy as well; if it failed to insist, there would be Slovene riots in Trieste, and a violent outburst of feeling all over Yugoslavia.

Ultimately, the international commission, inadequately provided with armed support — or, probably, not provided with it at all — would despair, and Trieste would relapse into Italian hands. The Yugoslavs are the smaller state and would have to acquiesce, as Poland had to acquiesce in the German advance at Danzig.

But, no, Poland did not acquiesce. At the last moment she found backers among the Great Powers and resisted German demands. Is it likely that Yugoslavia will be without a backer among the Great Powers? Unless it is certain that Yugoslavia can be isolated and silenced, to make Trieste a Free City would be to ensure a new European war.

AFTER ALL, we have a certain experience in how Free Cities work. History may not be a good guide, but it is all we have; and in regard to Free Cities the experience of history is decisive. Two Free Cities were created after the Four Years' war: Fiume and Danzig.

The severance of Fiume from Italy was not imposed upon Italy by the Great Powers, as the severance of Trieste from Italy would be imposed by the Great Powers. It was proposed by the Italians themselves and contained in the Treaty of Rapallo, which Italy voluntarily signed with Yugoslavia. Yet, as soon as the Treaty had been signed, Italian filibusters seized Fiume, with the support of Italian warships; and the Italian government threatened the Yugoslavs with war when they attempted to restore the settlement according to the Treaty which Italy herself had proposed.

In 1924, four years after the Treaty of Rapallo, Italy compelled Yugoslavia to tear up the Treaty and to agree to the Italian annexation of Fiume. Is it surprising that the proposal to make Trieste a Free City is regarded without enthusiasm by the Yugoslavs? They believe, and not without good grounds, that it is a method of keeping the door open for Italian claims until Italy is strong enough to enforce them.

But it may be said that the cases of Fiume and Trieste are not analogous: Fiume became a Free City by a voluntary act and its freedom depended solely on Italy's good faith, never a strong element in Italian policy. Trieste would be made a Free City by the Great Powers and its freedom would be maintained by their will.

We have also had experience of this type of Free City. In fact, the friends of Italy in 1945 need simply to take out of the second-hand cupboard the arguments which were used against the Polish claims to Danzig in 1919. Danzig was said to be inhabited solely by Germans. This was true, a good deal truer than that Trieste is inhabited solely by Italians. Of Danzig's 360,000 inhabitants, less than 10,000 were Poles; within the city limits of Trieste there are at least 60,000 Slovenes, a third of the population, and if the Free City were extended to include some of the immediate hinterland this proportion would be at least doubled.

It was said that German sentiment would be offended if Germans were put under Polish rule, in fact, that it was impossible to put civilised Germans under the rule of the barbarous Poles; and would be unreconciled to the peace settlement. A great deal was made of Danzig's historic significance for Germany and of the cultural importance of Danzig for Germany; just as some now



talk of the importance of Trieste for Italian culture and Italian history.

In both cases, this importance is imaginary, though in the case of Danzig there was perhaps a little excuse for it. It was asserted that Polish economic needs would be perfectly met by the creation of a Free City. And finally, it was emphasized that the Free City would be under the guarantee of the League of Nations and that the Great Powers could be relied upon to defend it from either Polish or German encroachments.

Every schoolboy knows how these expectations were falsified. Danzig did not serve Polish economic needs. The Poles were compelled at enormous expense to build a harbour of their own. German sentiment was not satisfied with the position of Danzig as a Free City; rather it regarded this position as a standing invitation to agitate for the return of Danzig to Germany.

After all, if the Great Powers had refused to give Danzig to Poland in 1919 when Germany was prostrate, they would surely not refuse it to Germany when she was again powerful. The League of Nations proved impotent to protect the rights either of Poland or of the democratic German minority in Danzig.

The Great Powers made feeble attempts, not to intervene, but to mediate. Soon they wearied even of this and left Poland to negotiate directly with Germany — as Yugoslavia was left to negotiate directly with Italy in 1920. Danzig's final gift to mankind was to provide an excuse for the most destructive war in history, in which both the Soviet Union and the British Empire only just escaped total defeat. And this is the experiment which the friends of Italy wish to repeat at Trieste!

The experiment would have the same results. Italian sentiment would not be satisfied with the status of a Free City; it would accept the invitation to agitate for the return of Trieste to Italy. The City Council, with its Italian majority, would not seek to promote Yugoslav commerce. Still more — a cause of quarrel which did not exist at Danzig — it would neglect the Slovene schools, or, more probably, attempt to close them.

There would be demonstrations in Belgrade and demonstrations in Rome. The Yugoslavs would seek to enlist the help of the Soviet Union; the Italians would seek for British help or, if that were not forthcoming, would look for support to a reviving

Germany — after all, an alliance between Germany and Italy is not unknown to history, and on the first occasion (in 1866) it won Venice for Italy.

The best that could be hoped for is that the Great Powers, anxious to avoid a general war, would refuse to intervene, and would leave the dispute to be settled by direct negotiation between Italy and Yugoslavia. The Italians, for the most pacific reasons, would "localise" the dispute, as Hitler sought to localise his disputes in the nineteen-thirties. If they achieved their aim, Yugoslavia would have no chance; and a new Munich would once more save the peace of the world.

To make Trieste a Free City can have no other purpose than to hold the door open for the reassertion of Italian claims at a time when Italy will be better equipped to enforce them than she is now. The Free City idea would be a post-dated cheque with which to buy off the Yugoslavs; but when, in a few years' time, they presented it to the World Security Organisation, it would be returned marked "*refer to drawer*." And where then will be the drawers, the unpractical idealists of England and America?

They will be explaining away, or ignoring, the Italian treatment of the Slovenes, declaring that, after all, civilised Italians cannot be put under the rule of barbarous Slavs, and denouncing, as harsh and unjust, the very peace settlement which, it was claimed, would satisfy Italian opinion!

THUS, BY A PROCESS OF ELIMINATION, we are left with the fourth solution: of applying in this disputed territory the rule which has been accepted everywhere else in Europe and determining its destiny *according to the predominant nationality of the whole*. The frontier would be drawn where the Slovene countryside ends and the Italian countryside begins, a national frontier which has not changed for a thousand years; and the towns would share the destiny of the countryside.

This would undoubtedly be the best economic solution. Trieste would be the only great port in Yugoslav hands, and the Yugoslav Minister of Transport would make it his principal concern. Fiume, its only rival, has only a single-track line with a very steep gradient to the main trunk line through Zagreb and, owing to natural obstacles, can never be a port on the same scale; it would



never have been created at all, except for the Hungarian desire to have a port not under the control of Vienna.

Moreover, co-operation with the other states of central Europe must be an essential element in Yugoslav policy; therefore, as a matter of Yugoslav interest, everything will be done to make Trieste the major port of Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary and Austria. This would have a profound political effect, and one which it is a British interest to promote.

When Trieste was in Italian hands, it was used as a political weapon to divide central Europe and to compel Austria and Hungary to follow a policy hostile to Czecho-Slovakia and Hungary. If Trieste were in Yugoslav hands, it would also be used as a political weapon, but to compel Austria and Hungary to co-operate with Czecho-Slovakia and Yugoslavia.

This would be regretted only by the friends of Archduke Otto of Habsburg and of Admiral Horthy, and it is difficult to believe that they are deserving of sympathy.

THERE remains the national question. Would not the Yugoslavs inflict on the Italian inhabitants of Trieste all the injustices which the Italians have inflicted on the Slovenes and Croats?

There are strong grounds for believing that they would not.

In the first place, Yugoslavia is not, as Italy is, a national state. It is a federal state, containing at least five distinct nationalities, and comprising six federative units. The present Yugoslavia has far more in common with the old non-national Habsburg Empire than with a national state such as Italy; and, though there are likely to be national disputes in the future — as there should be in any healthy country — no one nationality will predominate. Besides, the Slovenes are less than two millions, of a total Yugoslav population of sixteen millions, so even the idea of a Slovene domination is out of the question.

But there is a second, and more decisive, argument. The Italian majority in Trieste is artificial. It could be maintained only by denying to the Slovenes their national rights, and when in the old days of the Habsburg empire the Slovenes enjoyed something like fair play, the Italian majority was dwindling rapidly. The Italians had to close the Slovene schools in order to keep their position. The Slovenes will only have to open their schools in

order to start catching up again. It will not be necessary for them to close the Italian schools.

Once the Slovenes are allowed to use their own language in the law courts and public offices, once they can send their children to Slovene schools, once Slovene books and newspapers can circulate freely, thousands who have called themselves Italians will revert to their nationality of origin. Moreover, when Trieste again becomes a great port — which it can never be under Italy — there will be a great demand for labour, and Slovenes will crowd in from the neighboring countryside.

The Slovenes will become a majority, probably within a generation; but they will become the majority by a natural process. To do so they will not need to employ the weapon of national persecution. This process has taken place, or is taking place, in every town of Eastern Europe; it can take place just as easily in Trieste.

THE READER will observe that I have conducted this argument on the most cynical basis. I have not attempted to make out that the Italians are, by nature, intolerant and chauvinistic or that the Slovenes are, by nature, tolerant and pacific. Though I think that the evidence would justify such an attempt, we must apply the same measure to both sides. Either we assume (as Italian propagandists do) that the Yugoslavs will remain bellicose and intolerant — in which case we must assume the same of the Italians. Or we assume, as Italian propagandists do, that the new Italy will behave in an entirely different way from the old — in which case we must assume the same of the Yugoslavs.

But it is an outrageous assumption to suppose that the Yugoslavs, who have been our allies, will possess all the vices of the old Italy; and that the Italians, who have been our enemies, will possess more virtues than any people has ever shown.

If both nations remain in the future what they have been in the past, then Trieste should be Yugoslav, for the Italians have shown themselves unfit to rule over Slovenes, whereas the Yugoslavs are likely to treat the Italian minority considerately, if only as a matter of self-interest.

If both nations live up to the fine promises of the present, then Trieste should be Yugoslav; since an Italy which had genuinely



abandoned imperialist ambitions would not desire to retain Trieste, and the Italians in Trieste would be more prosperous under Yugoslav rule than if they remained in Italy.

If the Italians live up to all their fine promises and the Yugoslavs to none of theirs — then and then only, Trieste should indeed be Italian — but Malta, Tobruk and Addis Ababa should be Italian as well!

The liberal press in England has been shocked that the Yugoslavs should have insisted on liberated Trieste themselves, instead of waiting for the decision of a peace conference; from this the worst conclusions are drawn.

Memories, especially British memories, are short. But *the Yugoslavs have not forgotten that they awaited the decision of a peace conference in 1919. In 1919 they went to Paris with clean hands and their claims were supported by the President of the United States, but they came away from Paris with their hands empty.*

Italian rule in Trieste rested on the same right as German rule in Prague, in Warsaw, in Paris, or in the Channel Isles — the right of conquest; the only difference is that the Yugoslavs were compelled to agree to their temporary defeat by the Treaty of Rapallo.

Thus, too, the Soviet Union was compelled to acknowledge the loss of the western Ukraine and of western White Russia to the Poles by the Treaty of Riga in 1921. But that has not prevented the Russians liberating these territories — with the approval of Great Britain and the United States.

What sanction and authority does the Treaty of Rapallo possess which the Treaty of Riga did not possess? What claim has the Ukraine to Lvov which Yugoslavia does not possess to Trieste? The Yugoslavs have not attempted to seize any territory which is either ethnically or historically Italian. They have simply recovered territory in which there is an indisputable Yugoslav majority and of which they were robbed by violence in 1920.

They have not done more than the Czechs have done in liberating all Czechoslovakia to the pre-Munich frontiers, without waiting for the verdict of an international conference. Yet the Munich settlement was an international arrangement, agreed to by England and France, while the Treaty of Rapallo was imposed upon Yugoslavia by Italy without the consent of any third party.

It is strange political mathematics indeed to suppose that it is right in 1945 to repudiate an agreement imposed by force in 1938, but wrong to repudiate an agreement imposed by force in 1924. Fourteen years is indeed a short period in which to turn wrong into right.

### *Post Scriptum.*

*This pamphlet attempts to give a short account of the problem of Trieste and of the frontier between Italy and Yugoslavia: and it would be out of keeping to include anything in the nature of a serious bibliography. But I cannot resist drawing the attention of the reader to The Italo-Yugoslav Boundary by A. E. Moodie (George Philip and Son, London), which has just been published and which covers the question in far greater geographical detail and with an enviable equipment of maps and geographical knowledge.*

*In particular I would emphasize the discussion of the economic functions of Trieste, with the admirable maps showing the trading connections of Trieste in 1913 and 1925, the map illustrating the distribution of nationalities in the region (reproduced overleaf), and, perhaps most of all, the account, which occupies almost half the book, of the way in which the late frontier was imposed by Italian violence and deceit after the Four Years war.*

*This destroys, once and for all, the notion that this frontier had any justification other than the possession of superior force by the Italians. It also underlines, what I have tried to show in the concluding passages above, that the possession of Trieste condemned Italy to an imperialist policy in Central Europe.*

THIS PAMPHLET appeared originally in London during the summer of 1945, under the imprint of the Yugoslav Information Office.

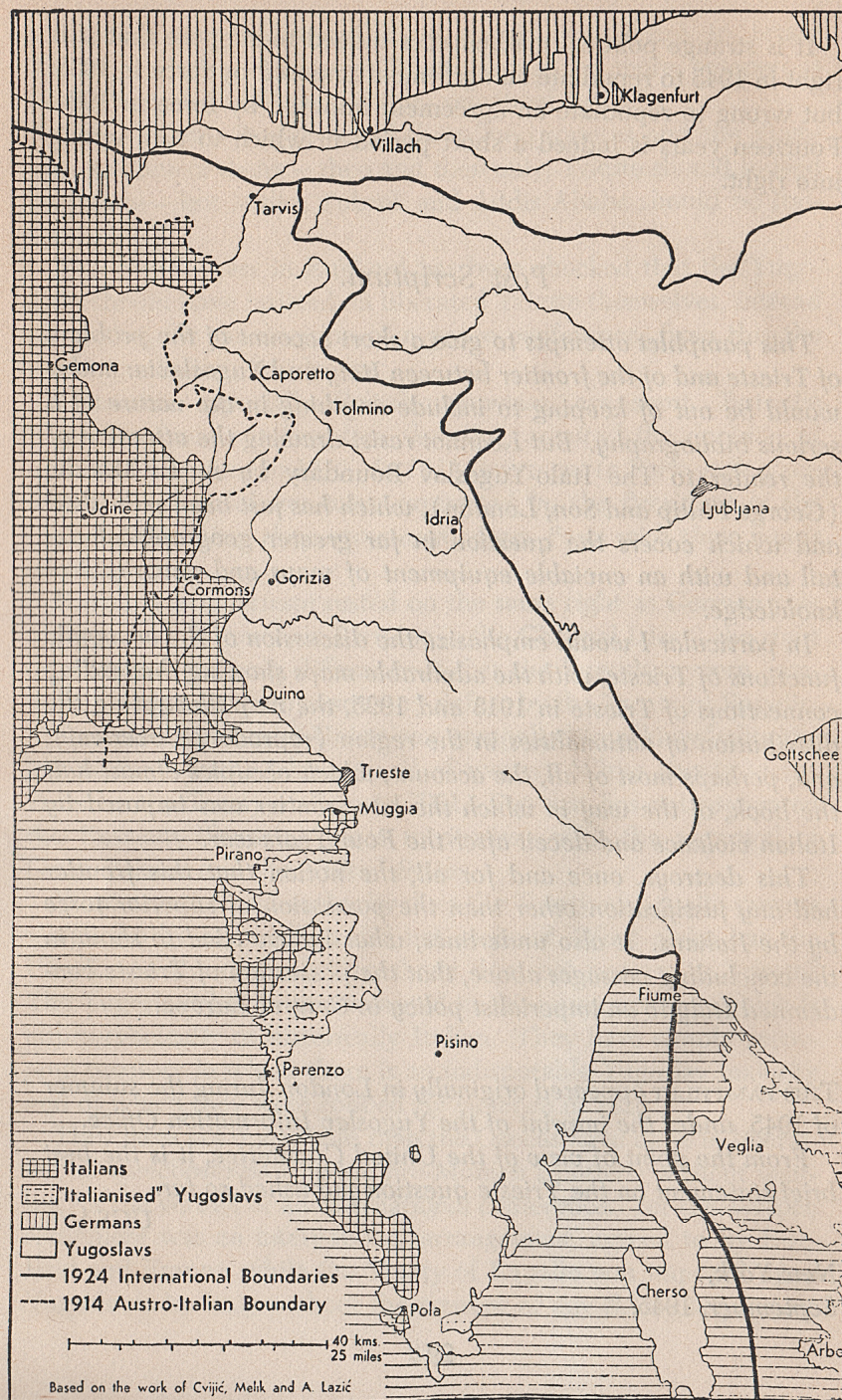
*From the point of view of the United Committee, it is the best brief statement on the Trieste question published so far.*

UCSA.

New York,  
September, 1945.



# Ethnographical Boundaries in the Julian Region



(Reproduced from *The Italo-Yugoslav Border*, by Dr. A. E. Moodie, by kind permission of Messrs. George Philip and Son).